

RICHARD RUSSELL AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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RICHARD RUSSELL

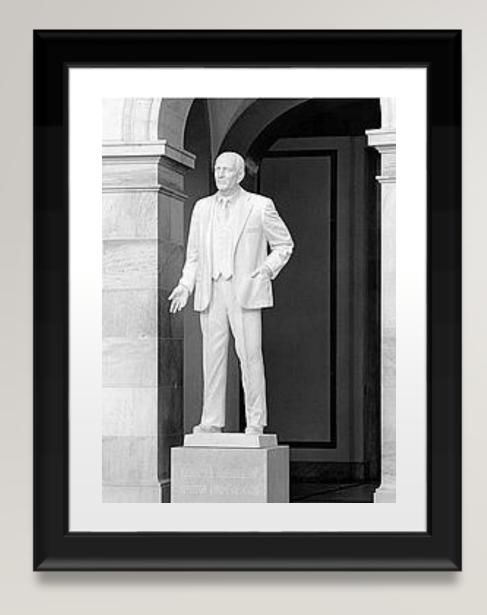
- Richard Russel was a democratic politician in the mid 1900's
- He served as governor for two years in 1931 before switching to Congress.
- Russell had a long career in congress serving for almost 40 years from 1933-1971



RICHARD RUSSEL (CONT.)



- Richard Russell served his tenure in Congress all the way until his death in 1971 due to emphysema
- His father was a former supreme court justice in the state of Georgia, so he was politically aware since birth
- Even though he was a democrat and strongly dislike the desegregation policies, he was one of the few southern democrats to attend meetings to their full
- Russell even had respect for his opponents, and remained faithful to his party even through differing opinions



RICHARD RUSSELL IN CONGRESS

- Richard Russell respected for his "long service and legislative skills, even among his opponents" (senate.gov).
- Throughout his time in Congress, he was known for his pro-segregation stances, even participating in filibusters to block Civil Rights Acts.
- His stance on segregation and the entire Civil
 Rights movement did not change for all 40 years.





- One of the judges ruling on desegregation said the he had to weigh the options on whether to "buy peace in our time at the expense of discord in the next" (Liebman).
- Ultimately, all schools in America are desegregated in the present, and many would question why it did not happen sooner.
- However, back then these "simple" decisions had severe consequences, backlash from the public for Eisenhower, and potentially setting a bad precedent for the judges.

RICHARD RUSSELL'S LETTER TO EISENHOWER

- Shortly after the use of the National Guard, Richard Russell wrote a formal complaint to President Eisenhower about the damages that occurred during the event
- In the letter, Russell blamed Eisenhower for the damages to the "innocent bystanders" and property.
- He alleges that 3 pedestrians had bayonets held at them and were forced down the street

AS A CITIZEN, AS A SENATOR OF THE UNITED STATES, AND AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED AND AS CHARKMAN OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,

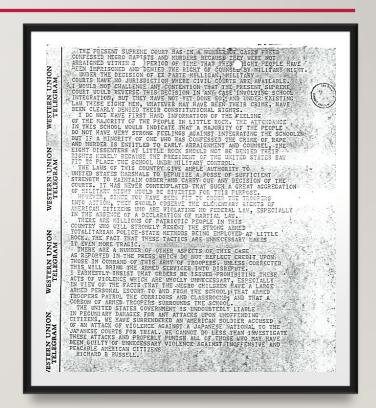
I MUST VIGOROUSLY PROTEST THE HIGHMANDED AND ILLEGAL METHODS
BEING EMPLOYED BY THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES UNDER
YOUR COMMAND WHO ARE CARRYING OUT YOUR CREEKS TO MIX THE RACES
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS.

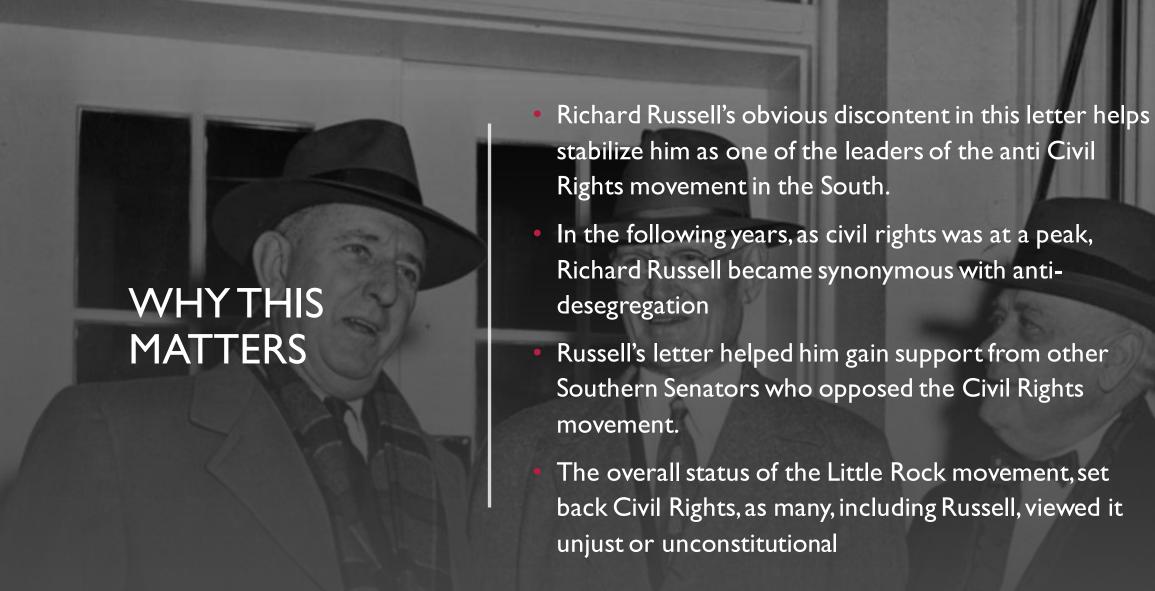
IF REPORTS OF REPUTABLE PRESS ASSOCIATIONS AND NEWS WRITERS ARE
BE BELIEVED, THESE SOLDIERS ARE DISREGARDING AND
OVERRIDING THE ELEMENTARY RIGHTS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS BY
APPLYING TACTOR WHILE MUST HAVE BEEN CONTENTS. AS THESE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS DESCRIBE COMPLETELY INEXCUSABLE AS THESE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS DESCRIBE CONTRELED. THE PEOPLE UNLESS THE PURPOSE BE TO INTIMIDATE AND OVERAWE ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY WHO ARE OPPOSED TO MIXING THE RACES BY FORCE. THESE DISPATCHES AGREE THAT AN UNAMINED CITIZEN HAD HIS KEAD CRACKED BY A RIFLE BUTT WHILE STANDING PEACEFULLY ON-PRIVATE PROPERTY MORE THAN ONE BLOCK REMOVED FROM THE SCHOOL AFTER HE HAD TOLD YOUR TROOPERS THAT HE WAS THERE WITH THE CONSENT OF THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT RELATES THAT THREE OR MORE CITIZENS
WERE PUSHED DOWN A STREET, WITH BAYONETS AT THEIR THROATS,
WHILE A BELLICOSE SERGEANI SHOUTED AGAIN AND AGAIN QUOTE
THE BAYONETS AT THEIR THROATS UNQUOTE. AN ASSOCIATED PRESS DISPATCH FROM LITTLE ROCK DATED TODAY STATES THAT EIGHT PERSONS ARRESTED BY YOUR TROOPERS VENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL YESTERDAY HAD BEEN HELD IN JAIL, INCOMMUNICADO OVERNIGHT WITHOUT ANY CHARGES HAVING BEEN FILED AGAINST THEM AND HAD BEEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO CALL A LAWYER. THE DISPATCH FURTHER STATES THAT EFFORTS TO FIND OUT WHAT WOULD BE DONE WITH THE EIGHT PEOPLE WERE FRUITLESS, AND BOTH-THE FBI AND THE UNITED STATES MARSHAL DISCLATMED ANY KNOWLEDGE

RUSSELL'S LETTER (CONT.)

- Russel continues to claim that citizens "who are violating no federal laws," are being punished.
- His thinks that these are meant to be "tactics" to force desegregation, and that the idea of that is tragic.
- He believes it to be tragic that the United States government has fallen so far, that they would violate martial law to get their way





LETTER FROM EISENHOWER TO RUSSELL

- Eisenhower replies to Russell very respectfully, even agreeing that the decision to use national force was difficult.
- He says that he has very rarely "felt as saddened" to have to order the use of force.
- He then explains that the situation could have been resolved more peacefully and less controversially if Arkansas police complied

September 27, 1957

The Honorable Richard B. Russell United States Senate Washington, D.C.



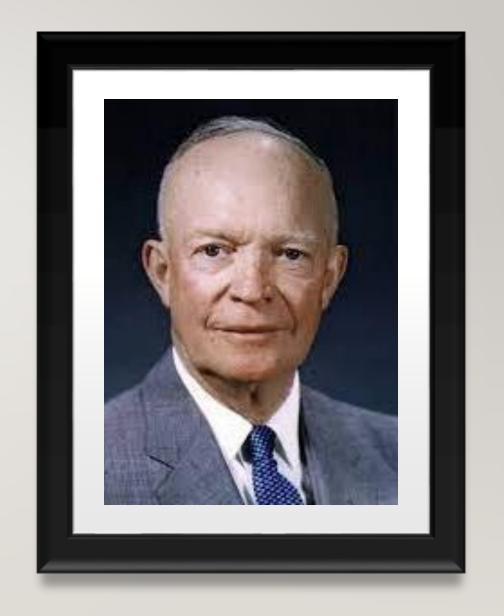
Few times in my life have I felt as saddened as when the obligations of my office required me to order the use of force within a state to carry out the decisions of a Federal Court. My conviction is that had the police powers of the State of Arkansas been utilized not to frustrate the orders of the Court but to support them, the ensuing violence and open disrespect for the law and the Federal Judiciary would never have occurred. The Arkansas National Guard could have handled the situation with ease had it been instructed to do so. As a matter of fact, had the integration of Central High School been permitted to take place without the intervention of the National Guard, there is little doubt that the process would have gone along quite as smoothly and quietly as it has in other Arkansas communities. When a State, by seeking to frustrate the orders of a Federal Court, encourages mobs of extremists to flout the orders of a Federal Court, and when a State refuses to utilize its police powers to protect against mobs persons who are peaceably exercising their right under the Constitution as defined in such Court orders, the oath of office of the President requires that he take action to give that protection. Failure to act in such a case would be tantamount to acquiescence in anarchy and the dissolution of the union.

I must say that I completely fail to comprehend your comparison of our troops to Hitler's storm troopers. In one case military power was used to further the ambitions and purposes of a ruthless dictator; in the other to preserve the institutions of free government

You allege certain wrong-doings on the part of individual soldiers

EISENHOWER'S LETTER (CONT.)

- Although he agrees that the use of federal force was a hard choice, Eisenhower also fails to recognize Russell's comparisons to Nazi Germany
- Russell compares the use of national force to a
 Nazi Germany led by Hitler, and Eisenhower
 explains that the decision was one to protect the
 institution of free government.



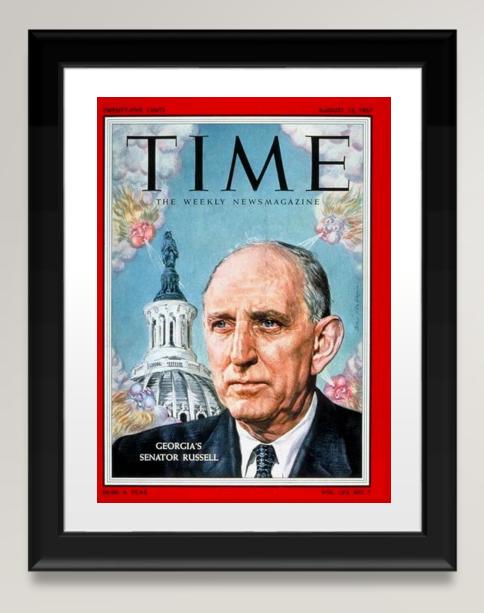


- Schools were closed for long periods of time and many citizens were upset
- The whole situation had many people in protest, and Eisenhower received backlash by many southerners in favor of segregation
- Richard Russell would soon become the face of Anti-Civil Rights and very publicly expressed his views



LETTER FROM MRS. SWEENY TO SENATOR RUSSELL

- In this letter, Mrs. Sweeny addresses her problems with the Civil Right's protestors, claiming their violence to be an issue to her safety and too America
- Mrs. Sweeny states in the letter that the violence is getting too much and that the "protestors" are asking for too much
- She expresses her concerns that if they get what they are asking for, what is stopping them from asking for more.



MRS. SWEENY'S LETTER (CONT.)

- She shares this letter with Richard Russell because she knows that he will share the same views as her.
- As a longtime opponent to Civil Rights, Russell likely receives many letters like these, asking why the government doesn't stop the protestors.
- Mrs. Sweeny hopes that Russell will be able to do something, but as a majority of the Senate is in support of desegregation, many of the citizens "cries for help" will fall short





WHY DOES THIS MATTER

- His thoughtful reply to a random citizen shows just how dedicated he is to his own movement against Civil Rights.
- Russell likely received many of the messages, so a meaningful reply to the senders probably meant a lot to them, potentially strengthening the cause against desegregation.
- Although many Senators would reply with a thoughtless message saying that they appreciate their support, Richard Russell takes the time to write many paragraphs of support.

OTHER LETTERS FROM RICHARD RUSSELL

- While Richard Russell takes the time to address support in length, he lacks in replies to people who share different viewpoints.
- One writer asked why he feels that African Americans cannot be equal to people like you and me.
 - Richard Russell replied with one short paragraph, essentially explaining that they can be equal, but there is nothing that says we can't be separate
- The differing response from this writer to Mrs. Sweeny accurately depicts how strong his feelings are, and that he really regrets not being able to do anything for people like her.



RICHARD RUSSELL'S OVERALL STANCE

- Looking at the multiple letters that Russell wrote, one can clearly see his passion and dedication to his beliefs
- Richard Russell worked until death, and he never budged on the issue of Civil Rights, heading the opposition for countless years.
- Overall, Richard Russell was a man who stuck to his principles, albeit morally wrong by today's standards, and led the opposition to Civil Rights into a hopeless battle

FURTHER SOURCES

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